

Literary News and Criticism

Three Good Books on the Art of Flying.

THE NEW ART OF FLYING. By Waldemar Kaempfert. With numerous illustrations. 12mo, pp. 291. Dodd, Mead & Co.

MONOPLANES AND BIPLANES. Their Design, Construction and Operation; the Application of Aerodynamic Theory, with a Complete Description and Comparison of the Notable Types. By Grover Cleveland Loening. B. 80, A. M. With 275 illustrations. 12mo, pp. 315. The J. B. Lippincott Company.

THE AEROPLANE, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE. By Claude Grahame-White and Harry Harper. With ninety-seven illustrations. 8vo, pp. xv, 319. Philadelphia: The J. B. Lippincott Company.

While these three books occasionally overlap each other, as is inevitable, they far outstrip each other, since each has been written with a different purpose. Mr. Kaempfert's book is an admirably clear "popularization" of the whole science and art of flying, from its earliest beginnings to its present state of development. Mr. Loening's book can be profitably taken up after a perusal of "The New Art of Flying," for "Monoplanes and Biplanes" progresses from Mr. Kaempfert's clear exposition in non-technical terms to a detailed technical discussion of design, construction and operation, and of the science of the air, with algebraic formulae, geometric figures, weather charts, tables of air pressures, etc. It includes also a complete description of all the models now in use, and a list of technical terms with their definitions. In fact, while the layman will find the reading of Mr. Loening's treatise greatly facilitated by his preliminary study of Mr. Kaempfert, he will, on the other hand, be led to recognize far more fully the popular thoroughness of "The New Art of Flying" by his entrance upon the theory of "Monoplanes and Biplanes" in its direct relation to actual design and practice.

Messrs. Grahame-White's and Harry Harper's handsomely illustrated volume is what used to be known as a "symposium" on various aspects of aviation, among its contributors being Louis Blériot, the late Cecil S. Grace, Howard T. Wright, Henry Farman and Louis Pauhan. All these authors combine in paying tribute to the enduring importance of the work of three pioneers, Lillenthal, Langley and Chanute; all discuss at length accidents and their causes, all look into the future, while, finally, Mr. Kaempfert and Messrs. White and Harper have chapters on the aeroplane and the law, and on its possible place in warfare. An important feature of "The Aeroplane Past and Present" is its record of fatalities from Lillenthal's death in 1896 down to February of the present year, a total of thirty-four. Still more interesting is this book's alphabetical list of the world's air pilots, 697 in number, of whom more than half (325) are Frenchmen, England coming second with 128, Germany third with 46, Italy fourth with 38, Russia fifth with 37 and America sixth with 31. Japan contributes four names. No less than seven French women are included. The large number of military flyers in the list is significant of the interest taken in the aeroplane by the governments of the world. Finally, this book contains detailed lists of aeroplane records, with the year, the name of the pilot and the distance for "cross-country flying, with and without passengers, duration and altitude flights, speed flying, altitude flying—M. Santos-Dumont leading chronologically with three feet attained in 1906—passenger carrying and overseas flights.

Mr. Kaempfert opens his book with a sane reminder that posterity may yet come to judge the invention of the telephone, the telegraph or of open-hearth steel of far greater material benefit to humanity than that of the aeroplane, where development for practical purposes still lies very much in the future. The machine, he points out, must be made far safer before it can have a commercial value; as yet it is only a dangerous sport. Still, he continues, it was by developing the racing automobile that the touring car was perfected, and the flying machine appears to be moving along the same line of progress.

The racer will give birth to the touring car, as the touring car of today was evolved from the racing car of five years ago. Incredible as it may seem, in less than a year from the time when the first motor car was built, a few years over the English Channel, a few years over the Atlantic, a few years over the Pacific, the actual record of automobiles in the first year of their commercial development is a flying Frenchman, a flying American or a flying German, and the flying machine appears to be moving along the same line of progress.

The simplicity and clarity of Mr. Kaempfert's explanations of what is, after all, a complicated scientific and mechanical subject are a delight throughout, whether he is explaining the lessons learned by the pioneers from observation of the flight of birds, the principle on which the monoplane was developed from the monoplane or the progress of the study of equilibrium and the methods adopted for securing it, or else where Mr. Meldrum comments shrewdly on the unsettled attitude of Hollanders who have lived abroad toward the ways of their country and the views of their people. In brief, if Mr. Meldrum has not solved the "secret" he approaches it closely and again, and from different directions.

His descriptions of Dutch home life itself have occasionally the informing value of the canvases of the seventeenth and eighteenth century "little masters" of Holland. He visits the Dutch farmer at home as well as the city dweller, and devotes some attention to the vanishing picturesque local costumes. This inquiry, he confesses, represents a "thwarted ambition," probably in the direction of tracing through these various dresses the Frisian, Saxon, Frankish, Saxon-Frisian and Saxon-Frankish elements of the population in their present distribution and mingling. The chapters on education, religion, the churches and politics are informing; so are the frequent references to Dutch forms of government and to the ingenuities of the Dutch system of taxation.

Not the least readable of the chapters in "The Aeroplane, Past, Present and Future" is that on the fascination of flying, contributed by Mr. Grahame-White. He himself declares the task to be a most difficult one and the sensation all but indescribable. Aviators whom he consulted on this point agree with him, and also on the unsatisfactory nature of the exclamations of the passengers they have carried, which vary from "Rippin'" to "It's like being suspended in something you know." He himself has this to say:

There is, at the back of one's mind, so to speak, when flying a sense of power,

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A WOMAN OF FORTY.

THE SECRET BOOK. By George Wemyss. Frontispiece by Clinton Walker. 12mo, pp. 336. The Sturges & Walton Company.

A good idea does not, unfortunately, always yield a good story. Mr. Wemyss had a happy thought when he invented the strictly anonymous, intensely introspective and revelatory diary of an unmarried woman of forty and caused it to fall into the hands of a man who, interested by its confidences, set about finding its author. So far, so good, but in the sequel the story fails to realize the expectations of the reader. Fictional feminine psychology is a flexible subject, allowing of an almost infinite variety of treatment. The woman of forty is "in the air" in European literature, though with the immature heroine may well continue to rule for some time longer. The woman depicted here is understandable, and even recognizable, but not compelling. Moreover, when the author resorts to an abduction in Italy to bring about a happy ending he mixes his genres in a way that is decidedly artistic.

A NAPOLEONIC EPISODE.

THE CROSS OF HONOUR. By Mary O'Sheawh. 12mo, pp. 340. Boston: Small, Maynard & Co.

The romance of Maria Walewska furnishes the main interest of this story, which is historical fiction of an older fashion, reminding the reader here and there of the sentimental romanticism of Louise Muhlbach. Napoleon is, of course, much to the fore. In fact, we see him in the first chapter at Notre Dame, attending the religious service on the eve of the Russian campaign. For good measure there is a complicated intrigue, in which a French priest figures with a lad whom he claims to be the Dauphin, a youth of shattered nerves, utterly unfit, as he himself knows, for the rôle which his guardian would have him play. There are conspiracies against the Emperor's life, skirmishes and the great hope of Poland, the hope of its independence restored by French arms, the hope that Maria Walewska shared. It is all hands put together, but the result is sentimental rather than historical. The episode is not linked closely to that series of almost incredible events which formed the Napoleonic era. The reader has to contribute more knowledge of history to the reading of the tale than the author imparts.

SOCIAL DISTANCES.

THE REVOLT AT ROSKELLYS. By William Caine. 12mo, pp. 361. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Roskelly's, St. Mithian, Cornwall, is an old-fashioned, comfortable hotel in an ideal, remote little winter resort. Socially it is all that can be desired, even though the little coterie of the elect that rules in its lounge and breakfast and dining room have a few reservations about each other's standing. Then, suddenly, the vulgarians invade the sacred place, a tradesman and his wife—both quite impossible, although related by misalliance to one of the aristocrats—a most affable widow, ready to make acquaintances, with an amiable daughter, and, finally, a queer, talkative old man with white whiskers, who does not dress for dinner, and shakes hands with the assistant managers. The book is a hugely enjoyable picture of that exclusiveness in which the English revel, and with which they make each other uncomfortable, of that strong caste consciousness which is far more than the mere snobbishness for which it is commonly mistaken. Mr. Caine has a delightful sense of humor.

MANY INVENTIONS.

YELLOWSTONE NIGHTS. By Herbert Quick. 12mo, pp. 315. The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Mr. Quick has strung together a collection of short stories after a tradition as old as that of the Canterbury Pilgrims. They are eight in the party touring Yellowstone Park, including the driver, whose name is Aconite Driscoll, and the hired man, who has played many parts in life. Then there are a minor poet, an artist, a bridal couple, a near-sighted, unphilosophical professor and a colonel. Each night in camp they draw lots, and the stories begin. They are of cattle ranches and lost mines, of frozen Indians, of Indian fighting and many other topics, not to forget the bride